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AUTHOR Kazin, Alfred
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ABSTRACT

This book, originally an invited lecture given at Harvard, recounts the formative experiences of Alfred Kazin, a Distinguished Professor of English, Emeritus, at Hunter College and at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York and a well-known literary critic. A blend of autobiography, history, and criticism that moves from New York in the 1930s to wartime England to the postwar South, the book emerges as a reaffirmation of literature in an age of deconstruction and critical dogma. The book takes the position that great writing matters and shows how it involves people morally, socially, and personally on the deepest level--something that Kazin finds is not usually discussed in university English departments in this age of theory. The book reflects on modernism, southern fiction, and Black, Jewish, or "New Yorker" writing, and shares anecdotes about Richard Wright. John Cheever, Saul Bellow, and Mark Rothko. Following a prologue, the book is divided into chapters called: (1) Before the War (focusing on Kazin's student days and his life as a fledgling professional writer); (2) During the War (describing his experiences while on assignment to report from and about England); and (3) After the War (when Kazin finds himself a recognized writer and a professor in various university English departments). (NKA)

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